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RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0443  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 000578

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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC  
OSLO FOR HELENA SCHRADER  
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY  
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS  
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS  
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER  
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD  
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART  
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT  
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/16/2017

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: PORT HARCOURT VIOLENCE RESUMES; ATTACKERS IDENTITY  
UNKNOWN

REF: LAGOS 567

Classified By: Acting Consul General Donald McConnell for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Despite the increased deployment of military troops to Port Harcourt, Rivers State following the August 6-12 violence (Reftel), post has confirmed reports that serious fighting and the possible use of explosives broke out throughout the city on August 16. Fighting and violence has been reported along the Trans-Amadi expressway, in the old Government Reservation Area (GRA), in Borokiri, and near the Port Harcourt Central Police Station. Militants/criminals are purportedly in plain civilian clothes and, according to a report from the Defense Attache, have been attacking military targets with heavy weapons and "mortars." Other reports have suggested the military is using helicopters for aerial shooting. The military has sustained casualties but has not confirmed any figures. Additional reports suggest violence is concentrated around Rivers State Government House.

12. (C) Ogon Patterson, an NGO contact in Port Harcourt, told Polspec on August 16 that the situation throughout the city can be likened to that of Baghdad as it is difficult to determine who is fighting whom. Furthermore, Patterson said it is unclear who is responsible for masterminding the attacks. On the other hand, according to Patrick Naagbanton, a well-connected human rights reporter in Port Harcourt, criminal leader Soboma George's convoy came under police attack the evening of August 15 and George escaped unharmed. (Note: Other rumors suggest George was either arrested or his body has been discovered and autopsied--to be confirmed. End Note.) Naagbanton told Poloff on August 16 George's "boys" countered the police attack by releasing violence on Port Harcourt while George escaped to his "hideout."

¶3. (C) Most company security representatives believe the fighting represents a turf battle between Soboma George and Ateke Tom, each trying to expand control before a peace initiative can take effect. Our security contacts likened the attackers to militias and criminal entities rather than groups seeking political change.

¶4. (C) Comment: According to most reports post has received, the August 16 resumption of violence in Port Harcourt has been widespread and intense. The military has returned fire, yet it is not clear who is responsible for initiating the attacks. While some contacts refer to the attackers as militants, there has been no indication that the ideologically-driven militants of Delta and Bayelsa states have a hand in the ongoing fighting in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. End Comment.  
MCCONNELL